

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 HA-05 TRSE-00 /089 W

-----120622 160301Z /73

R 151335Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6947

INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0509

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SHUM, SF

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF SECTION TEN DETAINEES

1. SUMMARY; THE RECENT RELEASE OF A NUMBER OF SECTION TEN DETAINEES IN PART REFLECTS GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE THAT IT HAS FOR THE MOMENT RESTORED CONTROL OVER MOST TOWNSHIPS. THE SELECTIVE RELEASE MAY SERVE TO FURTHER THE SPLIT WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY DEVELOPED BETWEEN MILITANT AND MODERATES IN THE BLACK MOVEMENT. THE ACTION IS ALSO PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO WIN MORE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR ITS PROPOSED COMMUNITY COUNCILS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE GOVERNMENT RELEASE OF PERCY QOBOZA AND 15 OTHER DETAINEES IN THE LAST WEEK MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED IN PART FOR ITS EXTERNAL IMPACT. BUT ESSENTIALLY THE MOVE REFLECTS MORE A DOMESTIC STRATEGY OF MIXING CONCILIATORY MOVES WITH CONTINUING TIGHT CONTROL. THE ACTION REVEALS GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE THAT SINCE THE OCT. 19 CRACKDOWN, IT HAS FOR THE MOMENT RESTORED ITS CONTROL OVER MOST BLACK TOWN-
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SHIPS. ALTHOUGH UNREST PERSISTS IN THE PORT ELIZABETH AREA, POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN SOWETO, THE HOTBED OF TURMOIL OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, AS WELL AS IN OTHER REEF TOWNSHIPS HAS FOR THE MOMENT WANED AND VIOLENCE HAS FALLEN OFF MARKEDLY. THIS SITUATION APPEARS TO RESULT NOT ONLY FROM A LOSS OF LEADERSHIP AND MOMENTUM BUT ALSO FROM AN INCREASING FOCUS BY MILITANTS ON THE

LONG-TERM REVOLUTIONARY GOAL RATHER THAN ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE APARTHEID SYSTEM SUCH AS BANTU EDUCATION. (A FORTHCOMING EMBASSY REPORT WILL DISCUSS IN GREATER DETAIL THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE BLACK MOVEMENT.)

3. THE GOVERNMENT'S SELECTIVE RELEASE OF SECTION TEN DETAINEES AND THE APPARENT INTENTION TO LEAVE MOST OF THE RADICAL BPC ADHERENTS IN JAIL MAY ALSO SERVE TO FURTHER THE SPLIT WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE MILITANT AND MODERATE ACTIVISTS. THE MOST NOTABLE FEATURE OF THE NOW BANNED SOWETO COMMITTEE OF TEN WAS THE WORKING COALITION IT REPRESENTED BETWEEN MODERATES AND RADICALS PRESSING NEGOTIATIONS ON THE GOVERNMENT. ONE SOURCE TELLS US THAT A WIDE RIFT OPENED OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS BETWEEN THE BPC DETAINEES AND THEIR COMMITTEE OF TEN FELLOW INMATES IN MODDERBEE PRISON.

4. IN THE MOST IMMEDIATE CONTEXT THE GOVERNMENT ACTION IS CONSISTENT WITH MINISTER OF PLURAL AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT CONNIE MULDER'S STATED INTENTION TO WIN MORE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED COMMUNITY COUNCILS. MULDER HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF PUBLICLY TO TRY TO ENTICE MODERATES IN THE COMMITTEE OF TEN TO SUPPORT AND EVEN PARTICIPATE IN THE BY-ELECTIONS WHICH HE HAS CALLED TO FILL THE 19 OUT OF 30 SEATS IN THE SOWETO COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOR WHICH NO

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CANDIDATES AT ALL CAME FORTH IN THE ELECTIONS EARLIER THIS MONTH (JOHANNESBURG 0430). IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT IF ANY CONCESSIONS MULDER WILL MAKE IN DEFINING THE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCILS IN ORDER TO TRY TO WIN COMMITTEE OF TEN APPROVAL. IN KEEPING WITH PAST NATIONALIST PRACTICE, HE MAY SIMPLY PROMISE MAJOR CHANGES IN RETURN FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT-DETERMINED STRUCTURES.

5. MULDER'S PROFESSED GOAL OF AUTONOMY FOR THE BLACK TOWNSHIPS IS OF COURSE IN LINE WITH THE COMMITTEE OF TEN'S MAJOR PROPOSAL OF LAST YEAR. IF THE RADICALS HAVE SPLIT OFF FROM THE COMMITTEE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY SEE DEALING WITH IT AS LESS THREATENING THAN BEFORE. WHILE MULDER WILL BE ANXIOUS TO TRY TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF ENGAGING QOBOZA AND AS MANY OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN MEMBERS AS POSSIBLE IN A DIALOGUE, LIKE HIS MORE INTRACTABLE PREDECESSOR, M.C. BOTHA, HE WILL ALSO BE CONCERNED NOT TO BE SEEN TO BE NEGOTIATING ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY AND THUS COMPROMISE THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY OVER THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.

BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, PRISONERS RELEASE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CAPET00509
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780116-0473
Format: TEL
From: CAPE TOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780367/aaaacert.tel
Line Count: 117
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 975ccec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3328485
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RELEASE OF SECTION TEN DETAINEES
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/975ccec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014